# "Signs on a white field": A Look at Orality *in* Literacy and James Joyce's *Ulysses*

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### Rediscovering Orality: Literate Perspectives

Writing and the written word have been the shaping forces of modern culture and consciousness. But while the *litterati* of our hemisphere predict and bemoan the decline of this culture—as evidenced by reduced reading and writing skills and the ascendency of new audiovisual media—their clamor  testifies to the status of literacy in modern societies.[1]   Although most of our daily communication and transactions are carried out orally, writing is accorded the highest authority and provides the norm not only for the evaluation of discourse but for value judgments in general. This attitude towards writing—unquestioned and largely unconscious—has for a long time prevented consideration and appreciation of phenomena of orality (Ong 1982; 1986).

Over the last three decades, however, there has been an increasing awareness of problems associated with orality and literacy, far transcending the mere availability or choice of either medium—the phonic in speech and the graphic in writing.  And as this new heuristic approach gained in scope, it also produced an extraordinary interdisciplinary exchange and new alliances in research. For those involved in orality/literacy research, which cuts across all the branches of the humanities, recognition and delineation of this heuristic dichotomy has constituted something like a "paradigm shift" (Schaefer 1997).

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[1] The restrictive view that simply equates "culture" and "literacy" is reflected, for example, in Hirsch 1987. In English the term *literate* is ambivalent: it can denote the antonym of either *illiterate* or *oral*. I want to make it quite clear that I am not concerned with the opposition between *literacy* and *illiteracy* here but rather with *orality* and *literacy* as both means and modes of discourse.

At first, only isolated aspects of orality and literacy were treated by scholars from various disciplines, such as cultural anthropology, classical philology, or medieval studies.[2] It would appear that the analysis of spoken and written language was also the prime domain of linguistics. But while structuralists have concerned themselves mainly with spoken language, other linguists have based their research on written material, more often than not without even making this choice explicit. Since it was assumed that writing simply represents spoken language in visible form—an assumption that also underlies Saussure's postulate of *the primacy of oral language*—the difference between speech and writing has largely remained uninvestigated. Only since the later 1960s have new impulses contributed to the emergence of studies in linguistic variety, including the investigation of variations across speech and writing.

As a consequence, the differences between fictional dialogue and natural speech on the one hand and the variations in the *representation* of speech and writing *in* literature on the other are only slowly being recognized and investigated. In this essay I want to introduce to a wider audience a linguistic approach that has built a convincing model of the use of oral and literate strategies in both speech and writing and is thus applicable also to the analysis of literature. This model has been developed by the two leading theoreticians of an interdisciplinary research project on "The Oral and the Written in Tension and Transition" at the University of Freiburg.[3] The original article by Peter Koch and Wulf Oesterreicher, entitled "Sprache der Nähe—Sprache der Distanz: Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit im Spannungsfeld von Sprachtheorie und Sprachgeschichte," was published in German in 1985; no translation has as yet appeared in English.[4]

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[2] Havelock (1986:24-29) identifies four publications from the early 1960s that focused on the fundamental differences between oral and literate cultures and thus paved the way for subsequent research: Claude Lévi-Strauss' *La Pensée sauvage* (1962), Marshall McLuhan's *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962), Jack Goody and Ian Watt's "The Consequences of Literacy" (1962-63), and his own *Preface to Plato* (1963).

[3] The Sonderforschungsbereich 321, "Übergänge und Spannungsfelder zwischen Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit," was founded in 1985 and numbered over one hundred members, from graduate students to senior professors, who conducted their research in 27 subprojects, fmanced by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. I myself have been a member of SFB 32l since 1988.

[4] This model is discussed in some publications in French and Spanish by the same authors (themselves linguists in Romance Languages), e.g. Koch 1993; further specifications of the model for the investigation of oral features in written texts, both

By applying this model to select passages from James Joyce's *Ulysses*, I intend to illustrate the concepts of *Sprache der Nähe* ("language of immediacy") and *Sprache der Distanz* ("language of distance") and demonstrate the usefulness of the orality/literacy approach for the study of literature. Not only can it serve as a metaphor for interpretation, but it can also be employed in the analysis of several levels of literary discourse, from character language to overall narrative strategies.

The double purpose of this essay demands some restrictions on the material considered. In the middle sections I will therefore focus on two extreme instances of the representation of character language that are contrasted in fictional medium and linguistic mode: Stephen's talk about *Hamlet* in the National Library (spoken/literate mode) and Martha Clifford's letter to Bloom (written/oral mode). In addition, I will discuss some metatextual commentaries on speech and writing in *Ulysses* that testify to Joyce's awareness of oral/literate phenomena.[5] Finally, the particular status of *orality in literature*, which differs markedly from *naturally occurring orality* both generically and functionally, needs to be addressed.

## The Medium and Beyond: Linguistic Conception

In the *Proteus* episode of *Ulysses* Stephen is walking along Sandymount strand and his thoughts merge into a few lines of poetry. He puts them down in writing, since he does not want to forget them. But only a moment later he wonders (3.414-16):[6]

> Who watches me here? Who ever anywhere will read these written words?
> Signs on a white field. Somewhere to someone in your flutiest voice.

Here, as throughout the whole episode, Stephen questions his own literary ambitions. His fear of failure, however, not only concerns his creativity and his command of language; it also relates to the medium through which he will address his audience: a written text as opposed to an oral performance. Yet the promise of success and the fear of failure do not reside

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fictional and non-fictional, are provided by Oesterreicher 1997.

[5] Just the collection and interpretation of such commentaries in literature would provide ample and interesting material for the evaluation of individual and cultural attitudes towards and consciousness of problems of orality and literacy; see also Goetsch 1987.

[6] Here and in the following I quote from Joyce 1922 (1984), cited by episode- and line-number.

simply in the difference between paper and voice, but in the communicative conditions they establish.

The situation of a writer is quite different from that of a speaker, and both need to adjust their communicative strategies to suit the medium through which they communicate. Writing, for instance, normally takes place in the absence of the prospective reader, and reading takes place in the absence of the author. It is this mutual absence that also troubles Stephen in *Proteus*: "Who ever anywhere will read these written words?" Only by fictionalizing the audience whom he means to address can an author escape this dilemma.[7] Furthermore, the distance in time and place that separates conception and reception of the text needs to be compensated. It is essential that information necessary for the understanding of the text but not immediately accessible to the reader be verbalized: contextual information has to be made textual when experience is transformed into "signs on a white field."[8]

Interestingly enough, Stephen envisions a personal setting in which he himself will read out his little poem, albeit with some self-irony: "Somewhere to someone in your flutiest voice." A recital would allow him to control his audience by using a particular intonation, facial expressions, and gestures.[9] Such paralinguistic signals are essential to an oral performance, but they can be captured only very insufficiently in a written text. This problem is reflected in the *Aeolus* episode when Dan Dawson's speech fails on rereading. Bloom's comment is therefore also a restatement of Stephen's fear: "All very fine to jeer at it now in cold print but it goes down like hot cake that stuff" (7.338-39). [10]

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[7] On this particular problem, see Ong (1975), who convincingly argues that this fictionalization is part of all writing, personal or public, factual or fictional. He describes the process thus (60): "If the writer succeeds in writing, it is generally because he can fictionalize in his imagination an audience he has learned to know not from daily life but from earlier writers who were fictionalizing in their imagination audiences they had learned to know in still earlier writers, and so on back to the dawn of written narrative." The situation of writers in the Middle Ages is discussed in Bäuml 1980, 1987.

[8] On the locus of meaning in oral and literate discourse, see Olson (1977), who coined the pertinent formula that in writing "the meaning is in the text;" the corollary is that in oral discourse "the meaning is in the context."

[9] On Joyce's own performances of his writings, see Sauceda 1991.

[10] Although Bloom's formulation in the interior monologue is elliptical, it should be clear that the opposition implied is between print (cold) and speech (hot). Stephen also associates script with coldness when he alters "the Polished Public" to "callous public" in

It is of course possible to transpose language from the one medium to the other because human language has the property of "medium-transferability" (Lyons 1981: 11). But it is only in this sense that language is independent of the respective medium in which linguistic signals are realized. The effects of the original and the transposed versions are necessarily quite different, even though they render "the same words." It is therefore not surprising that a person will tell a certain story differently when delivering it orally versus when he or she is putting it down in writing (cf. Tannen 1980). Yet, while these differences appear obvious enough, the underlying reasons are obscured rather than illuminated by classifying texts as either "oral" or "literate."

In the first place, these terms are used to denote the *linguistic medium*, forming an exclusive opposition: sound versus writing, phonic versus graphic representation of language. Alternatively, the terms "oral" and "literate" are also often used to denote something like the "mode" or "style" of language. However, "oral style" as opposed to "literate style" is not an absolute quality in itself but a matter of degree, because in any discourse the dominance of oral or literate features may vary. With respect to the mode of language, therefore, the terms "oral" or "literate" do not represent an exclusive opposition, but refer rather to the extreme poles of a large and continuous spectrum. A particular utterance or text may be located anywhere on this spectrum, yet it need not tend towards the pole that corresponds to its medium.

The use of oral-type language is thus not restricted to spoken utterances, nor is literate-type language employed exclusively in written texts: it is possible to find quite formal, quasi-literate language used in free oral discourse, as in a scholarly discussion, while personal notes or letters may be written in a very informal, quasi-oral mode. In view of these mixed patterns it is essential to distinguish sharply between the medium and

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the second line of Douglas Hyde's *envoi* to his *The Story of Early Gaelic Literature*: "Bound thee forth, my booklet, quick / To greet the callous public, / Writ, I ween, 'twas not my wish / In lean unlovely English" (9.96-99; Gifford and Seidman 1988:200). Note that Marshall McLuhan's distinction between "hot" and "cold" media does not correspond to the aural/visual opposition. McLuhan (l964:22) defmes a hot medium as one "that extends one single sense in 'high definition.' High definition is the state of being well filled with data." In his analysis of the Aeolus episode from the point of view of classical rhetoric, Erzgräber (1992:192) points out a passage from Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (Book III, l2, l413[b]) that is reflected in Bloom's comment: "Compared with those of others, the speeches of professional writers sound thin in actual contests. Those of the orators, on the other hand, are good to hear spoken, but look amateurish enough when they pass into the hands of a reader" (trans. Roberts 1971).

the mode of communication. In English-language publications, this distinction is sometimes indicated by using the terms "spoken" and "written" with respect to the medium and the terms "oral" and "literate" with respect to the mode of language. But this distinction is neither regularly defined nor universally observed, since the respective terms are basically synonymous. I therefore use the terminology of Peter Koch and Wulf Oesterreicher, where the term "language of immediacy" ("Sprache der Nähe") refers to the oral mode of language and the term "language of distance" ("Sprache der Distanz") to the literate mode of language.

This change in terminology is more profound than it may seem at first glance. There is more at stake here than a mere trading of an ambiguous label for a complicated one. "Language of distance" and "language of immediacy" not only denote certain styles of expression but rather the linguistic conception of discourse, reflecting also the underlying *communicative conditions* that induce oral or literate *communicative strategies*.

Since there is no one-to-one relation between medium and linguistic conception, the type of language and the degree of "immediacy" or "distance" of an utterance or text must depend on factors other than the medium itself.[11] Koch and Oesterreicher have shown that the concurrence of a number of *communicative conditions* determines the *communicative strategies* in a given communicative situation: dialogue, familiarity of partners, face-to-face interaction, free choice of topics, private setting, spontaneity, involvement, context-embeddedness, expressiveness, and affectivity are constituents for a language of immediacy; monologue, unfamiliarity of partners, time/space distance, fixed topics, public setting, reflection, detachment, contextual dissociation, and objectivity are constituents for a language of distance. Depending on the actual combination of these features, the resulting communicative strategies will show different degrees of information density, compactness, integration, complexity, elaboration, and planning. These characteristics are less marked in a language of immediacy—which tends to be processual and provisional—than they are in language of distance—which tends towards reification and finality.

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[11] The following is a summary of sections 2 and 3 of Koch and Oesterreicher 1985. The rendition of their terminology in English poses some difficulty. The German word "Nähe" means "closeness" or "proximity," but these translations capture the concept of "Sprache der Nähe" only insufficiently. In a private communication Wulf Oesterreicher suggested to me the notion "immediacy," which basically corresponds to the French translation *immédiat communicatif* used by Koch (1993).

Although linguistic conception is not determined by the medium, there is nevertheless a certain *affinity* between the two. In general, written language shows more traces of language of distance than oral language, which tends to be more immediate. And it is obvious that, with respect to the communicative conditions, some—but not all—parameters, such as dialogue vs. monologue and face-to-face interaction vs. time/space distance, are basically predefined by the medium. The influence of the medium on the linguistic conception, however, is a matter of degree, since there is still a number of other parameters independent of the medium.

In the next two sections of this essay I interpret several passages from *Ulysses* and provide additional illustrations of various aspects of this model. In order to emphasize once more that the medium is not a paramount factor in determining the linguistic conception of a given discourse, I have selected two sets of examples that are characterized by an inverse relationship between medium and linguistic conception: Stephen's talk about *Hamlet* at the National Library, where he uses language of distance in an oral setting, and Martha Clifford's correspondence with Bloom, which is carried out in language of immediacy.

## Distance in Speech: Stephen's *Hamlet*-Interpretation

At the National Library, Stephen becomes involved in a discussion about Shakespeare with the poet George Russel (A.E.), the essayist Magee (John Eglinton), and the librarians Lyster and Best. Initially, Stephen is one of several participants in a group exchange to which everyone in turn makes a relatively short and rather casual contribution. But soon Stephen is provoked to explain his own theory of *Hamlet*—father, son, and ghost. Immediately, the communicative conditions change. Stephen assumes the role of a lecturer and delivers his argument in a series of longer monologic statements; his formerly equal partners in conversation then become his audience.

The relationship between Stephen and his audience is an important factor in the shaping of the strategies of his discourse. The setting is semi-public: Stephen knows his listeners, but they are not his friends; they are above him in age and status, and they share neither his philosophical convictions nor his views on the function of literature.[12] These men will judge his theory from a critical distance, and, since his ideas are rather

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[12] For a detailed analysis of the different characters, their respective attitudes, and their interaction in this episode, see Erzgräber 1987.

abstruse, Stephen's success also depends on a convincing or at least entertaining presentation.

The topic is fixed, and Stephen is in the spotlight. Two lines of interior monologue show that he feels pressured. Although he has to formulate it off the top of his head, he makes a concentrated effort to plan his speech:

> Local colour. Work in all you know. Make them accomplices. (9.158)

> Composition of place. Ignatius Loyola, make haste to help me! (9.163)[13]

Stephen starts out by depicting an Elizabethan performance of *Hamlet*. This introduction not only supplies the context for his argument, but also aims at involving his audience emotionally. He signals the beginning of his narrative by establishing eye-contact (9.154-57):

> It is this hour of a day in mid June, Stephen said, begging with a swift glance their hearing. The flag is up on the playhouse by the bankside. The bear Sackerson growls in the pit near it, Paris garden. Canvasclimbers who sailed with Drake chew their sausages among the groundlings.

Stephen speaks in relatively short but complete sentences; only the "Paris garden" is thrown in as an afterthought. Throughout his presentation, details are not just mentioned but elaborated on with adjectives, appositions, or relative clauses. There is a progressive build-up of information, and as Stephen warms to his topic, his thoughts and his syntax become increasingly complex. Particularly when he is allowed to speak for longer stretches without interruption, he uses hypotactic constructions to integrate different aspects of the argument into his chain of reasoning.

On the other hand, Stephen's language in the extended monologic passages contrasts markedly with that of his interior monologues. In the latter his thoughts are represented as jumping from one association to the next; the sentences are short, mainly paratactic, and often truncated. Even without deeper analysis of the interior monologue it is obvious that Stephen is represented as formulating his thoughts—which are addressed to nobody but himself—in language of immediacy, whereas his theory about *Hamlet* is

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[13] Friedhelm Rathjen pointed out to me that these lines resemble stage directions and thus encourage a reading of Stephen's presentation as a performance or role-play (just as a reading of his own poems "in your flutiest voice" would be). Probably, using language of distance always involves a certain amount of role-playing, of fictionalizing one's own voice and language in a way similar to that suggested by Ong (1975).

delivered in language of distance. In the general discussion the participants also use a language of distance; however, they do so to a lesser degree than Stephen does in his own presentation. Moreover, their language is characterized by idiosyncratic differences.[14]

The communicative conditions within which Stephen explains his theory of *Hamlet* are marked by distance, and he is able to adjust his linguistic strategies accordingly. His speech, however, does not tend as far to the extreme end of the conceptual continuum as, for instance, the language of the *Ithaca* episode (nor is his interior monologue as immediate as Molly's stream-of-consciousness in *Penelope*). This "lesser distance" of his performance is related to the immediacy inherent in the oral setting. Since the occasion is only semi-formal and semi-public, his chosen degree of linguistic distance is sufficient and acceptable.

When Stephen is invited to present his ideas about Shakespeare's life arid plays, he has to react spontaneously to the demands of his audience. Their presence limits his time for reflection: he has to think while he speaks, but he still has to make his argument explicit and concise. To control his audience's reactions, Stephen repeatedly uses rhetorical questions, which serve a "dialogic" purpose in the scholarly dispute. This seemingly oral device, however, is a consciously chosen stratagem and therefore also a mark of linguistic distance:

> Is it possible that that player Shakespeare, a ghost by absence, and in the vesture of buried Denmark, a ghost by death, speaking his own words to his own son's name (had Hamnet Shakespeare lived he would have been prince Hamlet's twin), is it possible, I want to know, or probable that he did not draw or foresee the logical conclusion of those premises: you are the dispossessed son: I am the murdered father: your mother is the guilty queen, Ann Shakespeare, born Hathaway? (9.174-80)

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[14] I want to stress again that the terms "language of distance" and "language of immediacy" refer to the extreme poles of a conceptual continuum. This continuum is spatial rather than linear, since the linguistic conception is the result of a combination of many features of both communicative conditions and communicative strategies, some of which may be immediate and some distant. Koch and Oesterreicher (1985:21) define the continuum as "den Raum, in dem nähe- und distanzsprachliche Komponenten im Rahmen der einzelnen Parameter sich mischen und damit bestimmte Äuβerungsformen konstituieren" ("that space in which the components of immediate and distant language blend within the framework of the individual parameters, thus constituting specific forms of discourse;" my translation). It is hence possible to evaluate different pieces of discourse comparatively and arrive at a *relative* gradation.

Stephen is not acting out a pre-written "lecture," and when he is interrupted several times, he has to reorganize his approach (e.g., 9.846-49). Still, his Jesuit training enables him to master this challenging situation. And although he cannot convince John Eglinton of his theory (9.1064-66; cf. also 9.369-71), at least the two librarians seem to be quite impressed. Mr. Best's question—"Are you going to write it?" (9.1068)—suggests that Stephen succeeds in presenting his ideas with a finality that comes close enough to literate standards.

## Immediacy in Writing: Martha Clifford's Letter

Martha Clifford's letter to Leopold Bloom in *Lotus-Eaters*, on the other hand, resembles an informal oral conversation, although their correspondence at first glance appears to be based on communicative conditions of distance. Martha and Bloom have never met personally, but they came into contact through an advertisement Bloom had placed in the *Irish Times*: "Wanted, smart lady typist to aid gentleman in literary work" (8.326-27). Since then, they have only communicated in writing. Thus, apart from general "knowledge of the world," they share virtually no information except for what has been conveyed in their previous letters, presumably three by each of them (17.1796-98).

Bloom, for his part, is quite happy with this arrangement. He prefers hiding behind the anonymity of the letters, just as he hides behind the pseudonym "Henry Flower" and behind a stylized handwriting that he has designed especially for this purpose (11.860). With these devices he constructs a feigned identity—"literary work" indeed—to act his part in the correspondence with Martha, while he himself remains at a safe distance, detached, a voyeur of letters and imagined scenes.

Martha, on the other hand, is unwilling to accept the role that he has, by extension, also assigned to her in this game of hide-and-seek. It appears to me, however, that Martha's repeated insistence on a face-to-face meeting springs not only from her desire to advance the intimacy of their relationship, but also from her uneasiness with the medium of writing. Martha would prefer talking, and four times she demands of Bloom, "tell me" (5.245, 247, 251, 258)—"Then I will tell you all" (5.254). For she is able neither to fictionalize a reader for her letters (cf. Ong 1975) nor to structure her thoughts into a coherent exposition. The conceptual demands of writing are beyond her grasp—she is a typist, trained in copying, but not a skilled writer, unused even to composing private letters.

Martha also types her letters to Bloom (17.1841); however, she does so not in order to conceal her handwriting—as Bloom does, with an effort— but to write with more ease. Since she is trained in this technique, she is able to write faster than by hand. Yet the speed of expression in a medium is directly related to the factor of reflection versus spontaneity in linguistic conception. Since speaking is a much faster process than handwriting, with less time for deliberate planning, oral language tends to be immediate. Typing is a very fast mode of written composition, and while it allows for communicative strategies of distance such as planning and editing, it can also be fast enough to capture oral speed.[15]

Martha's letter also seems to have been "talked into her typewriter." There is no structuring of information except for the text's moving from previous letters to a future meeting and further letters. In between, Martha jumps from one thought to the next, juxtaposing rather than integrating her ideas. The language is repetitive and redundant: twice she threatens to "punish you" (5.244, 252) and four times she calls Bloom "naughty" (5.245, 247, 252, 255); the syntax is simple and mainly paratactic.

For reasons we can only speculate about, Martha has not even taken the time to proofread and edit her letter; it thus contains several mistakes. There are at least two typographical errors: "that other world" (5.245) and "if you do not wrote" (5.253). Yet her complaint that her "patience are exhausted" (5.254) is probably not a typo but rather a slip of concordance, owing  to the homophony  with the plural of *patient—patients* in oral speech. Her confession that "I have never felt myself so  much drawn to a man as you. I feel so bad about" (5.249-50) falls short of the written standard because of its fragmentary  nature, another  typical  feature of  oral

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[15] Chafe (1982:36-37) points out that "handwriting characteristically takes place at slower than one-tenth the speed of speaking. Presumably, most of the differences between written and spoken language have resulted from the nature of handwriting rather than typing, but even typing takes place at, say, about one-third the speed of speaking, and that rate is for copying, not for the creation of new language. . . . It is also relevant that reading, the other end of the process, is faster."

Joyce was well aware of this affinity between typing and speech. Frank Budgen reports a conversation with him about other authors, who produced more books than he did: "'Yes,' said Joyce. 'But how do they do it? They talk them into a typewriter'" (Budgen 1972:22). Joyce went on to say that he felt himself quite capable of doing that, but did not consider it worth doing. The implicit criticism is directed not against typing as such, but—in my terminology—against the conceptual immediacy it injects into the process of writing, as lacking in complexity, elaboration, and planning, thus diminishing the status of the work as art.

formulation.[16] The end of her letter shows "language in progress" with two periods in mid-sentence setting off afterthoughts—"oral postscripts"—from the originally conceived content (5.254-57):[17]

> Goodbye now, naughty darling, I have such a bad headache. today. and write *by return* to your longing
>
> <div align="center">Martha</div>

These mistakes and shortcomings corroborate the impression that Martha has "only" *trans-scribed* her thoughts as spontaneously as they crossed her mind.[18] Typing thus allowed her to preserve her voice in writing.

Speed is obviously of great importance to Martha, a fact that is also indicated by her insistence on an answer "*by return*" (5.255-56). Through a fast exchange of letters—and local mail was fast in those days—it is possible to simulate a dialogue, although each individual letter is a monologic statement. But even within her letter, Martha enacts a sort of dialogue by alternating between statements, questions, and requests. This strategy is a result of the unfamiliarity of the two correspondents, who as

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[16] Possibly this construction also contains an apokoinu: "you I feel so bad about." This particular form of ellipsis is typical of conceptually oral writing. It can also be found in letters by Joyce's wife Nora Barnacle, which undoubtedly served as a model for this letter; see, e.g., Nora's letter from August 1917 (Ellmann 1966:403): "If you telephone me tomorrow Monday ... *now I have got the telephon number is 33* telephone hour is from 8 to 12 if you like to phone me tomorrow I shall wait at the telephone at Eleven if you telephone well and good if not dosent matter" (italics added).

[17] In a private communication Thomas J. Rice suggested to me that the superfluous periods constitute a scriptural pun, playing on the idea that Martha has her period ("Has her roses probably" 5.285). However, in the Random House edition (Joyce 1922 [1961]:78) this passage reads: "Goodbye now, naughty darling. I have such a bad headache today and write *by return* to your longing / MARTHA." This "more correct" version weakens but does not invalidate my argument. It reflects rather the editor's attitudes towards literacy and literariness, yet it does so at the expense of Joyce's method of characterizing his figures through their mistakes.

[18] In German terminology it is possible to make a distinction between *Verschriftung* and *Verschriftlichung*, discussed in detail by Oesterreicher (1993). This distinction, however, can hardly be captured in translation: *Verschriftung* refers to writing as simply a *medial transcoding*, while *Verschriftlichung* implies a *conceptual transcoding* to suit the communicative conditions in writing. It should be noted, however, that even medial transcoding requires a minimum of conceptual effort. Martha's letter has to be interpreted as a *Verschriftung* of her thoughts. Likewise, the letters of Joyce's wife Nora may serve as important nonfictional examples of *Verschriftung*.

yet have nothing else to discuss but their correspondence. And although Martha is eager to obtain more information about Bloom, she is careful enough not to reveal too much about herself, at least not in writing. The amount of factual information conveyed is almost zero. Instead, Martha engages in metacommunication, referring to their last letters, soliciting more letters and perhaps a meeting. Thus her letter mainly serves a phatic function: it is a signal to ensure the continuation of the communication, just as eye-contact, a nod, or an affirmative "mmh" promote ongoingness in oral conversation.[19]

Martha's letter exhibits many features that are characteristic of oral conversation as opposed to expository prose writing. Yet we must assume that she uses language of immediacy not by choice but because her communicative competence is limited. First of all, she misinterprets the communicative conditions of the correspondence (although it must be conceded that these conditions are, at the least, ambiguous). Through their previous letters, which are not given in *Ulysses*, Bloom and Martha presumably have established a sort of contract that defines their correspondence as intimate and erotic. They have thus set up a communication of immediacy that nevertheless takes place within communicative conditions of distance. This discrepancy can only be reconciled through play, by feigning communicative immediacy; yet feigning immediacy requires strategies of distance (Goetsch 1985:213; also Oesterreicher 1997).

Such a level of double-play is certainly beyond Martha's grasp, for she seems hardly able to conduct a communication of distance—in either speech or writing. This ability is acquired by training—the higher the level of distance, the greater the amount of training needed. In a literate culture this training is based on the experience with written texts, in practicing both reading and writing them. The technology of writing has to be mastered as a manual craft, and graphic and orthographic rules have to be acquired. But most importantly, a writer needs to learn how to dominate written language as a discourse *sui generis*.[20]

Apparently, Martha is lacking the routine necessary to master such communicative strategies of distance.  It is therefore not surprising that she

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[19] On the six functions of language, see Jakobson 1960.

[20] Considering how little schooling was available to girls at the turn of the century (cf. Maddox 1988:2lf.; Dillon 1982), the writings of Nora Barnacle or her fictional counterparts (such as Martha Clifford) should not simply be interpreted as signs of "female stupidity."

is even less capable of negotiating the paradox of *immediacy in distance* with which she is confronted by the unique conditions of her correspondence with Bloom. The immediacy displayed by her letter is real and not feigned. Nevertheless, her communication proves successful enough, since Bloom answers her letter—"To keep it up" (11.872).

## Fictionalizing Orality: Literate Strategies

In order to introduce and illustrate the concepts of *language of distance* and *language of immediacy*, I have so far treated Stephen's lecture and Martha's letter as if they were real events rather than fictional representations. Of course, the subtlety with which Joyce handles language invites such a procedure.  Generations of readers  have been impressed by the "authenticity" of his renditions of discourse, capturing even the finest nuances of speech behavior and thus endowing his characters with "linguistic fingerprints." On the other hand, Joyce was sensitive and skilled enough to vary the mode of discourse in accordance with the communicative situation portrayed in a particular scene, as the foregoing analyses show.[21] Frank Budgen's praise, particularly of Joyce's "oral styles," can hardly be surpassed: "Some conversations ring so true that they might have been caught up from actual life by a sound-recording instrument" (1972:218).

Nevertheless, the difference between the fictional and the natural, the realistic and the real, cannot and must not be ignored, and Budgen's comparison also draws attention to this difference. It is well known that Joyce was a notorious note-taker, even in conversations, but he did not have a tape recorder that would have allowed him to produce absolutely faithful transcriptions.[22] Yet it was not until this technology was available that linguists realized the full extent to which spoken utterances differed from written texts and could thus "hear" a difference between authentic and fictional orality. Christian Mair comments on this difference (1992:104):

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[21] Of course, in the experimental episodes the *representation of discourse* (characters' speech) is subjected to the particular stylistic intentions, with the result that the communicative conditions of the *discourse of representation* (narrative) dominate over those of the representation of discourse. Still, even in these situations certain degrees of variation between immediacy and distance are indicated.

[22] On Joyce's method of note-taking, see Herring 1972 and 1977.

> Anybody who has ever worked through transcripts of authentic conversation knows how tedious such reading is: texts are structurally and organisationally incoherent, highly repetitive and full of minor breakdowns ranging from embarrassed pauses to incomprehensible stretches due to several speakers talking simultaneously. In short: very different from the well planned economical point-counter-point of good fictional or dramatic dialogue in which even apparent redundancy will be interpreted as meaningful.

Again, it must be conceded that Joyce's literary dialogues often exhibit the same features that have been noted for linguistic transcriptions of spontaneous oral utterances. In *Ulysses*, the illusion is indeed so perfect that one easily overlooks the fact that it was created only by a combination (and often also manipulation) of selected features of nonstandard language, such as dialectal markers, unorthographic spellings (to represent phonetic variation), syntactic simplicity, and ellipses. In addition, voluntary suppression or deletion of contextual information as well as textual disorganization may enhance the impression of a spontaneous, processural, and provisional communication of immediacy.

This list of features is by no means exhaustive, nor is Joyce the only author who uses strategies of this type in order to fictionalize orality. They are regularly exploited to a greater or lesser degree in all modern literature to create the impression of immediacy. Yet, as Elinor Ochs points out (1979:78):

> It is important to distinguish this use of unplanned discourse features from truly unplanned discourse. Simply displaying certain features is not sufficient for a discourse to be unplanned. The discourse must lack forethought and prior organization on the part of the communicator . . . . We can draw an analogy here between this behavior and that of the sober man pretending to be drunk.

In other words, to fictionalize language of immediacy requires compositional strategies of distance. Therefore, in its written form, literary orality can only feign to be spontaneous or processural, because it is—on principle—planned, final, and reified (Goetsch 1985:213, 208); it is what Ochs (1979:77) has called "planned unplanned discourse."

Orality in literature thus confronts us with a double paradox. In the first place, we are to read something written as *if* it were spoken. But because the opposition between the graphic and the phonic medium is conflated by the projection into two-dimensional script, the conceptual demands of reading and writing dominate the representation of oral

language. Conventionally, graphic signals such as quotation marks or textualized *inquit*-formulas are used to indicate the beginning and end of fictional utterances. In addition, fictional discourse can be "styled" orally by adapting select features of language of immediacy. But such a procedure necessarily demands compositional strategies of distance, and this constitutes the second aspect of the paradox of orality in literature. Still another level of paradox is noted by Max Nanny (1988:217), who points out that "precisely at that moment when literacy became common property in the West and the book age reached its peak, the literary avant-garde returned to orality" (my translation). [23] In other words, only in a fully literate culture, one that had already developed a complete repertoire of linguistic strategies to suit the particular communicative conditions of writing, did writers become aware of these strategies as literate and begin to undercut them.

For a long time, literary language in post-Gutenbergian fiction, including both narrative language and character speech, reflected only the chosen medium and compositional situation of their authors, who were addressing written monologues to unknown readers (still the dominant paradigm for much of contemporary fiction). Yet, since at least the nineteenth century, there has been an increasing tendency towards an "oralization" of literary texts, beginning with the adaptation of oral features in characters' speech.[24] This development was brought to a climax in modern literature, where not only are *representations of discourse* rendered as authentically as possible, but oral strategies are also exploited in the *discourse of representation*, the literary discourse as a whole.

In recasting literary discourse, modern authors actually draw on two very different types of orality that need to be distinguished. Nänny (1988:215) calls these two types "synchronic" and "diachronic" orality, referring to an everyday kind of conversational orality on the one hand and oral poetry of preliterate cultures on the other. The underlying difference

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[23] "genau in dem Moment, da Schriftlichkeit im Westen Allgemeingut wurde und das Buchzeitalter seinen Höhepunkt erreichte, die Avantgarde der Literatur sich zur Mündlichkeit zurückwendete."

[24] This tendency is already noticeable in some earlier authors, such as Lawrence Sterne, who plays with the conventions of oral and literate representation in his *Tristram Shandy*. Likewise, Henry Fielding employs dialect in *Tom Jones* to characterize Squire Western as vulgar. Dialect is of course one means of creating the impression of "spokenness" in literary or dramatic dialogue; it has been used at least since Shakespeare, although mainly for comic effects rather than mimetic representation.

between the two, however, is better captured by the concepts of immediacy and distance.

In the case of "synchronic orality" authors pretend they are addressing good friends, people with whom they share not just a general knowledge of the world but a world of experience, voluntarily suppressing contextual information that would normally be essential for a successful communication among strangers. Such an approach to telling a story goes far beyond the mere manipulation of lexicon or syntax in order to create the illusion of "spokenness" in character language or narrator language within the text. This kind of fictional orality simulates a fictional immediacy between author/text and reader, overriding the actual communicative conditions of distance that exist between them.

Secondly, modern authors also return to and imitate patterns of traditional oral art forms, such as the Homeric epics, on which Joyce framed his *Ulysses*. However, the composition of traditional oral poetry did not rest on linguistic strategies of immediacy but on linguistic strategies of distance. Since this language of distance ought not to be confounded with conceptually literate language, Koch and Oesterreicher have suggested the term *elaborate orality* when referring to traditional oral poetry (1985:30). Still, the fictionalization of narrative modes that imitate either form of orality, synchronic or diachronic, always requires conceptually literate strategies, artifice, and planning in order to override both literate and literary conventions.

We can conclude, therefore, that there actually exists a large variety of oral/literate phenomena on different levels of fictional discourse. In addition, the types of those oral/literate phenomena vary in different genres throughout literary history, depending on the degree of literacy of a given culture and its respective attitudes toward language in speech and writing. And, finally, there is a vast difference between fictional orality and natural oral phenomena with respect to both compositional linguistic strategies and textual function. All these diverse phenomena invite our attention, but they also require a carefully differentiated treatment, precisely because of their diversity.[25]

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